

REMARKS:

At the time of the Office Action, claims 1-20 were pending and considered by the Examiner. The Examiner has identified the groups of species set forth below and has required the applicants to elect a single disclosed species for prosecution on the merits to which the claims shall be restricted if no generic claim is finally held to be allowable. Currently, the groups are: Group I – Figs. 4, 5, 5A-B; Group II – Figs. 6, 6A-B; Group III – Fig. 7; and Group IV – Figs. 8-10. The applicants elect, with traverse, the claims associated with Group I. Currently, claims 1-8, 15, 16, 19 and 20 are considered generic, and claims 9 and 17 read specifically on the species of Group I.

It is understood that an election of species as required is set forth to facilitate the Examiner's initial search in the examination of the application. However, the undersigned notes that an initial search has already been completed by the Office. The application was originally filed with 14 claims, of which claims 1 and 5 were independent. At the time of filing, claims 1-8 were generic to all of the species currently identified by the Examiner. Claims 9-14 read on the various species identified by the Examiner. In response to the first Office Action, the applicants undertook the time and expense to prepare and file an appropriate response. Claims 1-8 are still generic to all of the species and new claims 15, 16, 19 and 20 are also generic. In other words, the relative scope of the claimed invention has not significantly changed since the filing of the application. It is noted by the undersigned that a new Examiner has been assigned to this case. It is respectfully submitted that if the first Examiner did not see to issuing an election requirement, it is unfair to the applicants for the new Examiner to issue an election requirement without a very good reason to do so.

The undersigned respectfully submits that a search for the elected species and the other species will not result in a serious burden on the Examiner in searching. All of the species require tactile feedback features. The main difference between the elected species and the non-elected species is the relative shape and configuration of the tactile feedback features. Thus, in order for the Examiner to perform a thorough and complete search in regards to the tactile feedback features of the claims, the Examiner should not initially be concerned about a particular shape or configuration. A proper search would,

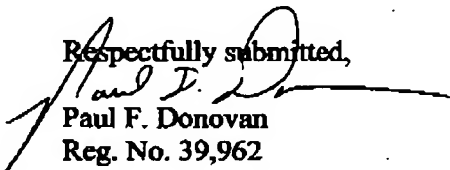
therefore, encompass the subject matter of the elected and non-elected species of the present invention. Applicants respectfully submit that co-prosecution of all the claims in the present application is required in the interests of administrative efficiency. A complete and thorough search of the prior art requires a search for tactile feedback features, regardless of their shape and configuration. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that there will not be a serious burden placed on the Examiner if election is not required, because a search considering the structural limitations found in each of the generic claims will require a review of all of the species identified by the Examiner.

Practicality and efficiency and a lack of serious burden on the Examiner dictate that the claims should be retained in a single application and the election requirement should be withdrawn. The election requirement, if sustained, could prejudice the applicants because of the increased cost to applicants arising from the potential for further substantial filing fees and prosecution costs. Lastly, given the close relationship between the species, prosecution in the same application would be administratively efficient for the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Specifically, by prosecuting the Groups of Inventions together, searches could be consolidated, and one Examiner could readily examine the subject matter of all the claims of this application at once.

For at least these reasons, it is respectfully requested that the pending election of species requirement be reconsidered before the applicants and the Office are put to the burden and expense of potentially prosecuting multiple applications for the subject invention.

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Respectfully submitted,


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